

REMARKS

The Office Action dated February 28, 2006 has been received and its contents carefully noted. In response thereto, applicants have canceled claim 5, added claims 21 - 22 and amended the specification and remaining claims in an effort to place the application in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the objection to the drawings and the rejections of the claims is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Drawings

The Examiner objects to the drawings because Figures 18 and 19 do not show how the springs 98 are connected to the respective hooks. It should be understood that the springs 98 are not connected to the hooks but are merely sandwiched therebetween. The springs 98 are connected to the air journal 54 using the threaded holes 94,96 as explained in paragraph 41 starting on page 8 of the application.

The Examiner has also requested that the "a keyed and a slotted locking member" be identified. This member is shown in Fig. 7 and explained in the last sentence of paragraph 45 on page 9 of the application.

In view of the above explanations, it is respectfully submitted that the drawing objection should be withdrawn. However, applicants would be willing to consider appropriate specific drawing amendment suggestions from the Examiner if clarification of the drawings is necessary.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-20 have been rejected as being indefinite for the reasons indicated in the Office Action. Claim 5 has been canceled. Applicants have made appropriate corrections to the remaining claims to clarify the first and second couplings in claims 1 and 12 and delete "a keyed and a slotted" in claim 10 - 11 and 19 - 20. It is believed that any indefiniteness in the claims has been corrected so the rejection should be withdrawn. However, applicants would be willing to consider other appropriate specific suggestions from the Examiner in order to further clarify the claims as might be necessary.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Turning now to the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103, claims 1-6, 8, 12-15 and 17 as being completely shown by Gaudin (U.S. Patent No. 3,414,210). Claims 7 and 16 have been rejected on the grounds of alleged obviousness when Matsuda et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,480,022) is combined with Gaudin. Claims 9 and 18 have been rejected on the grounds of alleged obviousness based on the Gaudin patent. Applicants respectfully disagree with these rejections for the following cogent reasons.

In the Office Action, the Examiner explains in detail how the Gaudin and Matsuda et al. patents are being applied to these claims. The Gaudin patent differs from the present invention as it does not show "at least one first coupling" and "at least one second coupling" (i.e. pairs of cooperating longitudinally extending hooks 30, 32, 34, 36) with return springs 98 interposed

therebetween. The modifying reference to Matsuda et al. does not correct these deficiencies of Gaudin.

In order to emphasize these differences, claims 1 and 12 have been amended to emphasize that "each said at least one first coupling being at least one pair of longitudinally extending hook elements" and "each said at least one second coupling being at least one pair of longitudinally extending hook elements complementary to and cooperating with said longitudinally extending hook members of said at least one first coupling to limit radial movement of said at least two "arcuate" leaf elements relative to said generally cylindrical inner body". New claims 21 and 22 add features directed to the position of the springs 98 between the at least one first and second couplings (i.e. the pairs of cooperating longitudinally extending hooks 30, 32, 34, 36).

Since all of the claims appear to have limitations not shown by the prior art, the rejections of claims under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 are believed to be moot and should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all the claims are allowable and early favorable action is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to call applicants' attorney if any questions remain following review of this response.

Respectfully submitted,

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